

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05

OMB-01 /087 W

-----181955Z 066699 /73

R 181755Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4672

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1023

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLAB, ILO, GY

SUBJECT: BURNHAM SPEECH TO CARIBBEAN LABOR MINISTERS

REF: GEORGETOWN 910

SUMMARY: IN AN ADDRESS TO CARIBBEAN LABOR MINISTERS MAY 11, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM LECTURED THEM ON THE NECESSITY OF ADJUSTING THEIR SOCIETIES SO THAT WORKERS HAVE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE. HE ALSO URGED GOVERNMENTS TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY, ALONG WITH THE TRADE UNIONS, FOR TRAINING WORKERS IN BOTH SKILLS AND ATTITUDES. FINALLY, IN AN ASCERBIC REFERENCE TO THE ILO AND EFFORTS TO SEPARATE POLITICS FROM LABOR ISSUES, HE SAID POLITICS AND LABOR AFFAIRS WERE TIED TOGETHER IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AND URGED THAT THE MINISTERS AGREE ON A COMMON APPROACH, SUITED TO THE NEEDS OF THE CARIBBEAN AREA, FOR USE AT THE ILC IN GENEVA NEXT MONTH. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A SPEECH OPENING THE THIRD CARIBBEAN LABOR

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MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN GEORGETOWN MAY 11, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM LECTURED THE MINISTERS AND, INDIRECTLY, HIS FELLOW CARIBBEAN PRIME MINISTERS, CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF ADJUSTING THEIR SOCIETIES SO THAT WORKERS HAVE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AND ROLE. THE 40-MINUTE SPEECH WAS DELIVERED SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY, BUT WITHOUT A WRITTEN TEXT.

2. BURNHAM'S CENTRAL MESSAGE WAS THAT REFORMS SHOULD BE MADE SO THAT WORKERS COULD BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE ECONOMIES AND POLITICS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE AREA. THE PROCESS WAS UNDERWAY IN GUYANA AND ELSEWHERE IN VARYING DEGREES BUT THE PROCESS SHOULD BE ACCELERATED. IN GUYANA THE PROCESS IS CALLED SOCIALISM. SOME OF HIS CARIBBEAN COLLEAGUES, HE SAID, WOULD NOT USE THAT WORD, BUT THE WORD WAS NOT IMPORTANT. IT WAS THE PROCESS OF GIVING WORKERS THEIR DUE, WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL.

3. HE TOLD THE MINISTERS THAT NO MATTER HOW MANY LOANS THEIR PRIME MINISTERS OR MINISTERS OF FINANCE COULD NEGOTIATE, NO MATTER HOW MANY NICETIES THEIR DIPLOMATS MIGHT BE EXPERT IN, ALL THAT WOULD BE "BUT WATER OFF A DUCK'S BACK UNLESS WE SETTLE THE PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIETIES, THE POSITION OF THE WORKERS, UNLESS WE MOVE TOWARD A REAL WORKERS' GOVERNMENT IN EACH OF OUR TERRITORIES." HE CONCLUDED BY ADMONISHING THEM THAT EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT MOTIVATED IDEOLOGICALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY TOWARD FULFILLING THE WORKERS NEEDS, THEY HAVE MINDS, THEY HAVE EYES AND SHOULD LOOK AROUND THEM AT WORKERS' CONDITIONS IN THEIR SOCIETIES AND ASK THEMSELVES WHERE THEY WILL BE IF THE NEW EMPHASIS THAT HE HAS PROPOSED IS NOT TAKEN. WHERE WOULD THEY BE AFTER THE EXPLOSION?

4. HE SAID THAT TRAINING OF WORKERS WAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE. TRAINING MUST BE OF A MUCH DEEPER AND CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE INVOLVED NATURE THAN IN THE PAST. MINISTERS OF LABOR SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE TRAINING, AND HE URGED THE MINISTERS TO SEEK TO PERSUADE THEIR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS TO ASSIST IN TRAINING WORKERS. THE TRAINING SHOULD GIVE WORKERS AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEIR ECONOMY IS AND WHERE IT IS GOING. SECONDLY, IT SHOULD PROVIDE SKILLS. SUCH TRAINING SHOULD NOT BE LEFT SOLELY TO LABOR UNIONS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO IT. NOR SHOULD IT BE LEFT TO THE EMPLOYERS, ALTHOUGH EMPLOYERS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUM TOTAL OF TRAINING. THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRAINING SHOULD BE WITH THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE GOVERNMENTS.

5. DURING THE SPEECH BURNHAM REFERRED TO THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN GENEVA. HE SAID HE HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT ILO DIRECTOR GENERAL HAD RECOMMENDED THAT POLITICAL MATTERS NOT BE RAISED BUT HE HOPED THAT HERE IN THE CARIBBEAN, LABOR MINISTERS

WOULD NOT CONCLUDE THAT LABOR AND POLITICAL MATTERS WERE NOT INTERTWINED. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, "IT IS A PIECE OF HYPOCRISY AND DISHONESTY TO SEPARATE POLITICS AND THE WELFARE OF WORKERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1023

6. LATER HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CARICOM LABOR MINISTERS SHOULD AGREE ON A COMMON APPROACH FOR THE JUNE MEETING. THE APPROACH SHOULD BE INFLUENCED BY THE FACTS AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CARIBBEAN RATHER THAN THE CONSIDERATIONS OF PLEASING ONE SUPERPOWER OR ANOTHER. HE HOPED THAT THE CARIBBEAN DELEGATES WOULD ACT AS WEST INDIANS AND NOT AS APPENDAGES OF GREAT POWERS. "LET US NOT BE SCRAMBLING AS BETWEEN OURSELVES FOR THIS CRUMB HERE AND THAT CRUMB THERE." HE HOPED THAT THE MINISTERS AT THE ILO WILL BE TALKING ABOUT THE NEEDS OF LABOR OF THE REGION AND HOW THOSE NEEDS CAN BE FULFILLED.

7. COMMENT: THE SPEECH CANNOT BUT HAVE AROUSED THE IRE OF LEADERS OF BARBADOS AND TRINIDAD, ALTHOUGH BURNHAM MENTIONED NO NAMES. THE SPEECH HAD TOUCHES OF IRONY AND VEILED SARCASM SCATTERED THROUGHOUT IT, ALTHOUGH BURNHAM'S DELIVERY WAS GOOD HUMORED RATHER BITTER OR ANGRY. ALTHOUGH THE REFERENCES TO THE ILO

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APPEARED TO CONTRADICT WHAT HIS LABOR MINISTER HAD
TOLD ME CONCERNING GUYANA'S POSITION, THIS HAS SINCE
BEEN CLARIFIED (SEPTTEL).
BLACKEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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